

STANDING HEEL RAISES

Heel raises are one of the most basic balance exercises. These heel raises incorporate more mindfulness on the part of participants. They are asked to notice the weight shifts and to rebalance in different positions. Strong calf muscles help control forward and backward swaying and add some extra oomph to the push-off phase of walking.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Strengthens calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus).
- ⦿ Teaches sway control.
- ⦿ Adds elements of balance to basic heel raises.

Set It Up »

You will not need any special equipment for this exercise.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ⦿ Participants should stand with good posture (feet parallel, soft knees, abs in, ribs lifted), behind a sturdy chair or beside a handrail.
- ⦿ They place hands on balance support only as needed (both, one, tightly, lightly, hovered).
- ⦿ Cue participants to distribute their body weight equally over both feet.

The Moves

Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Shift your body weight forward to the front part of your feet. Can you feel your weight shift toward the balls of your feet? Good.
- ⦿ Notice that your toes dig in a bit? Good.
- ⦿ Find your balance in this position. Your weight is shifted forward but your heels stay on the ground. Hold your balance there for a moment to get steady in this position.
- ⦿ Gradually lift your heels off the floor, slowly. Notice that your weight transfers onto the balls of the feet. Do you notice how the ball of the foot spreads out a bit to receive the weight?
- ⦿ Hold this position for a moment. Get steady here.
- ⦿ Let your knees soften. It will help. Do you notice how soft knees help? Good.
- ⦿ Slowly lower heels to the floor with control.
- ⦿ Shift your body weight back to the center of the foot (beginning position).
- ⦿ Repeat 8 to 15 times, as tolerated.
 - Shift weight forward (heels stay down). Hold.
 - Lift heels, maintain balance, and keep knees soft.
 - Lower heels.
 - Shift weight backward.



Take It Further »

- ◎ Use slightly longer holds in each position; just a second or two longer is adequate.
- ◎ Use an offset foot position to make one leg work harder.
 - One foot is forward, one back, shoulder-width apart.
 - Shift so that the body weight mostly is over the back foot.
 - Do a set of heel raises so that the back foot does most of the work.
 - Switch legs and repeat.

Give It More Balance »

Manipulate their footwork.

- ◎ Change the foot placement to wide apart or close together.
- ◎ Up and Hover: Lift heels, hold, and hover, maintaining balance.
- ◎ The Up and Up: Lift heels, then lift higher, hover, and lower.
- ◎ The Up and Step, Step: Lift heels, restabilize, take a few steps in place on the toes, rebalance, and then lower the heels.

Keep It Safe »

Let participants use as much balance support as they need. Participants should hold on with either one hand or both; tightly or lightly; or hover their hands just above the support.